

DD/0 82-3019

3 September 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for Operations

FROM:
Chief, International Activities Division,
Counterterrorism Group

SUBJECT: CIA Reaction to Claire Sterling's
Reader's Digest Article

1. In her latest article "The Plot to Murder the Pope" (Reader's Digest, September 1982), Claire Sterling has once again revealed her propensity to weave a seemingly airtight case out of thin and circumstantial evidence. As Sterling proved in her recent book The Terror Network, she can write persuasively and well but often fails to draw the important distinction between what is fact and what is her own speculation. As a result, many of her readers who are unfamiliar with either the details or complexities involved in analyzing the international terrorist scene can be easily misled.

2. The consensus among IAD/CTG, EUR/CGT and the DDI officers who were involved in the Agca case is that the CIA has, up to this point, been unable to substantiate in a convincing fashion any allegations of Bulgarian or any other Bloc country or organization's involvement with the attempted assassination of the Pope. This is not to say, however, that such a connection did not exist. The assailant, Mehmet Ali Agca, gave a variety of stories to his Italian interrogators, none of which could be confirmed. He apparently traveled through Bulgaria and had the name of a Bulgarian in his possession, but he traveled through numerous other countries as well and had acquaintances from a variety of

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nationalities. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Agca is presently cooperating with Italian authorities in the hope of working out some kind of deal. The Italians want to investigate further the theory that the attempt against the Pope was the result of an international conspiracy. Whether or not Agca will shed more light on the veracity of Sterling's assertions remains to be seen.

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